

**despite it all, here we are**

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No Archive Warnings Apply

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John "Soap" MacTavish/Simon "Ghost" Riley, John "Soap" MacTavish & Simon "Ghost" Riley, Minor or Background Relationship(s), Kyle "Gaz" Garrick & John "Soap" MacTavish, Kyle "Gaz" Garrick & Simon "Ghost" Riley, Kyle "Gaz" Garrick/John Price

**Character:**

John "Soap" MacTavish, Simon "Ghost" Riley, Kyle "Gaz" Garrick, John Price (Call of Duty)

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Alternate Universe - Vampire, Tagged both platonic and romantic cuz theyre not together but ghost IS in love with soap, and they care for each other as their best friends because the love of ur life can also be ur bff, Protective Simon "Ghost" Riley, Soft Simon "Ghost" Riley, Vampire Simon "Ghost" Riley, Vampire John "Soap" MacTavish, Hurt/Comfort, Minor Kyle "Gaz" Garrick/John Price, Mentioned John Price (Call of Duty), Simon "Ghost" Riley is Bad At Feelings, But its okay because Vampire Instincts will sort that out for him 🍷, John "Soap" MacTavish Loves Simon "Ghost" Riley, Ghosts just too dumb to see it, Simon "Ghost" Riley Loves John "Soap" MacTavish, Hurt John "Soap" MacTavish, Fluff, Like this is soft and sweet we SWEAR, Light Angst, very light, First Kiss, Possessive Behavior, But not creepy we swear, Possessive Simon "Ghost" Riley, Kyle "Gaz" Garrick & John "Soap" MacTavish Friendship, superior friendship tbh love them, Cuddling & Snuggling, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Temporary Character Death, Getting Together, Blood Drinking

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# despite it all, here we are

by [Cypherr](#)

## Summary

Ghost had locked the door behind him within seconds, mask ripped off and forgotten, the feral creature within him screaming at the sight of a terrified Fledgling. Fledglings should not be *scared*. Fledglings should be cradled close and held away from the world, safe from the humans and other monsters who would dare to harm them. Fledglings should be warm with fresh blood from their Sire, teething like a newborn babe, and purring in delight while the venom works through their system peacefully. *Fledglings' eyes should not be red.*

## Notes

Not smut for once ☐👉 nature is healing

# Chapter 1

Ghost was a solitary being. Most vampires like him were: Feral, *unwanted*. You could tell a vampire's status by the hue of their irises. Ones that had turned against their maker, slaughtered their Sire, were cursed with an eternal bloody crimson. Those who were whole and hale, with a Sire who cared for them properly, gazed upon the world with beautiful shades of amber. Those who had been stolen by another and were unlucky enough to survive were often blinded by their body's rapid decomposition and reconstruction. His own eyes were that of blood, and even the petty humans who looked upon his kind with disgust and poorly disguised superiority knew to stay well enough away from him.

Except for Soap.

John  *fucking*  MacTavish.

He wasn't sure if the man was brave or just plain stupid, but from day one, the little human had never feared him. It wasn't that the bastard was good at concealing it, either, because Ghost would be able to *smell* it on him, regardless. Even after Las Almas, hidden away in Alejandro's safe house with Rodolfo on watch, Soap had stuck by his side. Ghost was *hungry*, wounded, and exhausted from hours on the run alongside the adrenaline crash of betrayal. And Johnny had been bleeding— something that made his heart tug and his mouth *water*. Johnny smelt of the finest ambrosia, temptingly sweet and *mouthwatering*, like pomegranate seeds in Hades. So *badly* did Ghost want Soap to leave, to take watch with Rudy, and leave him to ride out the shocks of hunger alone until he could get himself under control and back on track. Instead, Soap had *laughed*, crowded Ghost against the edge of a counter, and *bared his neck*. Inexplicably, his Sergeant had *trusted him* to take only what he needed to scrape by. If Ghost were a lesser man, *Johnny would not have survived*. But they got through the night, and Soap still looked at him as if he hung the damn stars.

Needless to say, Ghost had formed an *attachment*. Ghost didn't *do* attachments. That had been Simon's thing, and that hadn't ended up well for him, all things considered. It got venom in his veins and a Sire he wanted *dead* more than anything. But Soap was *new*. Soap was *different*. No longer would he have to choke down the nauseating taste of iron and copper when he could have the finest ambrosia wine at his

beck and call. At least, that's what he tells himself. *Feeding stock*. Selfish, and not the *swooning* his long-dead heart does every time he sees the Scotsman.

It was not a surprise now that Ghost was... *eager* to get back to base, to see Johnny— check him for wounds and make sure that Price had taken care of him on their latest reconnaissance. Gaz was beside him on their helo, pouty as he typically was when separated from their Captain for extended periods. But, Gaz was far better at a stealthy infiltration than Soap, and Soap could pick apart a building without ever having stepped foot into it. *You'll be reunited soon*, Ghost tried to tell Gaz with a pat on his back, but the man merely turned those puppy dog eyes to him. It was a shame only Johnny's had ever worked. Met with a raised brow of indifference, Garrick turned his gaze back to the floor like a slighted pup.

The helo couldn't have landed back on home base's tarmac soon enough. Ghost was getting fed up with Gaz's constant shuffling and the not-so-hushed murmurs of the squad they had been saddled with. Garrick was practically *vibrating* beside him, so it was of no shock to Ghost that the man announced that he would handle any and all post-mission tasks with Price. Ghost knew— and Gaz knew that Ghost knew— that he was just eager to be alone with their Captain once again. But, Ghost was *generous*, and left to complete his own self-imposed list of tasks with a nod of his head. A nod that said that he hoped that Gaz understood that that included *paperwork*, because if there was one thing that Ghost hated more than arrogant recruits and men who couldn't keep their hands to themselves, it was *paperwork*.

Ghost hit his room first. As much as he wanted to see Johnny, he had days worth of grit and grime stuck to him. If he had to sit with it for another moment, he was going to *snap*. So, he shed his gear with well-practiced hands and let the lukewarm water of his shower wash away the tension he'd accumulated over the last week and a half. It was not until after he had dressed himself in his softest joggers and t-shirt, and scarfed down a bag of blood he had sitting in his mini-fridge, that he felt okay enough to find Johnny. It had struck him as peculiar that the man wasn't already in his room, having been alerted of their estimated arrival time beforehand. But, he knew that the Sergeant had other responsibilities that needed tending to that didn't include staying attached at Ghost's hip— as much as he loathed the idea of anyone else sharing Johnny's attention.

The walk to Soap's room was uneventful, but something had his hackles raised. Something sickly sweet was in the air, causing the

beast inside to lash at his ribcage and demand to be let out. It was *unnerving*, to say the least. Ghost did not like being *unsettled*. He was the thing that went bump in the dark, caused the hair on the backs of human's necks to raise. He was a hunter of the night, fearless and undead. A feral, beastly thing that had slaughtered his own Sire and took on the world alone.

Soap's door was unlocked, opening with merely a wheeze of the hinges when pushed. Soap's door was *always* locked— a habit that Ghost had gotten him into. Worse yet, was the hunched figure of his Sergeant in the corner, trembling like a leaf and reeking of *fear* so potently that Ghost feared he'd choke on it. *Worse*— Soap wasn't *breathing*, just staring up at him with tear-glazed, blood red eyes, and hands clawing at his warhawk like it was the only thing saving him from certain doom.

Ghost had locked the door behind him within seconds, mask ripped off and forgotten, the feral creature within him screaming at the sight of a terrified Fledgling. Fledglings should not be *scared*. Fledglings should be cradled close and held away from the world, safe from the humans and other monsters who would dare to harm them. Fledglings should be warm with fresh blood from their Sire, teething like a newborn babe, and purring in delight while the venom works through their system peacefully. *Fledglings' eyes should not be red.*

More importantly, *Johnny should not be a Fledgling.*

Ghost was unfamiliar with the concept of *comfort*. He grew up with the taste of venom on his tongue and rage in his veins, and even in his un-life, they remained close companions. Between the two of them, *Soap* was the one who provided all things soft and warm. Johnny was the sun, bright and loud and wonderful to bask in— if Simon's memory of the Earth's closest star is to be believed. But Johnny wasn't himself at the moment— not quite. A starving Fledgling was akin to a rabid baby animal, clueless and unable to understand why their caretaker *wasn't there*. So Ghost would have to *try*, because Johnny needed an elder vampire, and there was no way in hell that he'd let any other sorry sap anywhere near what was *his*. Not on a good day, and certainly not *now*.

"Johnny," he rumbled quietly, steps measured and audible as he approached. He wasn't entirely sure what the man *needed*. Ghost had received the bare minimum, forced to choke down Roba's filthy blood until the venom in his veins wouldn't kill him. Ghost couldn't be sure what had happened on the Sergeant's last mission, but he had a

feeling— based on the pure *confusion* in his scent— that Johnny hadn't even realized he'd been turned before he'd killed his Sire. 'Good,' the beast in him trilled. Johnny was *his* to care for, not some random blood-sucker who thought they could *use* what was *Ghost's*.

He crouched down in front of Soap, keenly aware of the man's piercing red gaze tracking his every move. "C'mere, luv," he crooned, opening his arms in invitation. Fledglings should be held close and *safe*, not tucked into corners. Safety was with *Ghost*. Ghost would protect him— *always*.

Johnny's movements were hesitant— *cautious*— but he crawled forward into Ghost's welcoming embrace. Soap was *cold*, in Ghost's lap, emaciated and quaking with the weight of his own body. It was a stark contrast to the solid furnace that his Sergeant typically was, and it tugged at something deep in his gut— dark and twisted, the feral thing humans had pinned him as finally showing itself. The choked whimper that Johnny let slip as he finally nuzzled his way against Ghost's neck made that creature *writhe*.

Soap couldn't have been turning for more than two days, if the tiny pinpricks of baby fangs against his flesh said anything. He wondered how Johnny had reacted, watching his canines fall out like children's teeth to make room for new ones. A coo was stuck in his throat at the feeling— at the sensation of a teething Fledgling *trusting him* to give him what he needs. Fangs too small, too *new*, to properly pierce through skin and muscle to reach his carotid artery. He gently tugged Johnny's head away by his hair, hushing his whine with a low purr, so he could pierce a razor-sharp nail through his neck. It wasn't the most comfortable feeling, opening his own artery, but it would heal, and Soap needed the assistance. It's what a *Sire* would do, and inwardly Ghost *preened* at being the one to take up this role in the absence of some undeserving *halfwit*.

Like a fish to water, Soap was straining toward the wound as soon as the first metallic twang of blood hit the air. Ghost guided him there easily, never one to deny his Sergeant anything. Johnny was *his*. His Fledgling to feed, to protect, to *love*. Because Ghost would always love Johnny, human or vampire, platonic or not. As long as Johnny was *there*, Ghost was content. Johnny was *new* and *different*, and as in all things, the *exception*. The feeling of lips pressed to his neck was only vaguely familiar, and never related to a situation such as *this*. A feral, lonely thing such as him had no desire to sire a brood of his own, but Johnny was *his*. So, Ghost cradled him close, ran clawed hands ever so gently through his warhawk, and petted the small of his back like one

might stroke a small dog. Slowly, but ever so surely, Johnny grew warm in his lap— stopped *trembling*. It would be some time before he had any kind of real strength back, but that was okay, because Ghost would *be there*. He did not mind the constant nibbling after Johnny had gotten his fill, sated and bone-tired. The teething was *cute*, though he'd never utter such a word aloud, but he enjoyed the deep rumble of his *purring* far more.

It was— well, it certainly wasn't *good*. Johnny was supposed to remain human with blood like ambrosia and a frankly unhealthy lack of fear. He was supposed to live as long and happy a life as their work allowed for. Maybe retire early on a farm somewhere in rural Scotland, live out the rest of his days with a loyal mutt and a herd of sheep by his side. Not— not crimson eyes and developing fangs. Not fingers desperately fisting his shirt in an attempt to abate the ache of growing claws. Not the scent of *fear* and *hunger* that Ghost is glad had disappeared as soon as Johnny had begun to gulp down the blood from his veins. But Ghost was here now, and it would have to do.

So, when Soap went to pull back, no longer as mindless with panic and thirst, Ghost could only respond with a purr of his own as he guided Johnny closer, back to his neck, to nibble and suckle as he fell into slumber's warm embrace. Because Johnny could have whatever he *wanted*— not just what he needed.

(And Price... well, he'd let their Captain live a few days more while he stuck by his Sergeant's side. After that, though... he can't make any promises.)



# the light provides

## Chapter Summary

TW/CW for negative self-talk, blood, and canon-typical violence

## Chapter Notes

Look, 90% of this chapter has been sitting finished in our docs since march. We *meant* to finish this a lot sooner we *swear* we just... sort of forgot this fic existed

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ghost, for all he was intimately aware of how *inhuman* he was, did his best to pretend that he was. His best to ignore every part of him that made him more *beast* than *man*. So, Ghost had never had– or at least acted on– the desire to *nest*. Nesting was the mark of an *animal*, mindless and instinct-driven. Ghost was no animal. *Simon* was no animal. Besides, nesting instincts were strong alongside broodmates. A *brood* was not something that Ghost had ever been privy to. No human family to call his own. No Sire to devote his loyalty to.

But Johnny... Johnny was *his*. Something that, for perhaps the first time in his life– and *unlife*– he could call his own. *Someone* he could consider more than a *coworker*. And now Johnny was weak– *fragile*. A teething, baby fledgling that needed the warmth and comfort a nest provided. The *safety* it offered. And so, for the first time since Roba's fangs had pierced his flesh, he gave into the urge to *nest*.

It wasn't easy. Lord knows how little experience Ghost has with such a concept, and instinct could only guide him so far. Still, his fledgling needed it, and he would provide. The minuscule amount of room and materials he had to work with did not make it any easier, nor did the fact that that beast within him demanded that he check on Soap every three minutes. He abhorred the thought of leaving Johnny alone– a *fledgling* alone. He preened at the thought of Johnny relying on him so completely, so *wholly*. He would need Ghost more than he needed his Sire. And that thought *should* have terrified him. Should have made him just as nauseous as anything resembling the idea of someone having to *depend* on Ghost did. But Johnny never failed to be the exception. Human or not, he was Ghost's *everything*. He had wormed his way into his heart long before Simon had even realized the place Johnny had carved for himself existed. By the time Ghost had realized

his own dependence on the Sergeant, it was already too late. Ghost may be a monster, but that did not mean that he could not do his best to be *more* than that for Soap. Even if that attempt presented itself as a smattering of sheets, a fuzzy blanket, and whatever clean clothes he could find to shove onto the thin cot in the corner of the room.

Settling into the *nest* was pleasant. Though, Ghost would attribute that to being enveloped by the scot's sharp cedar sent if asked. Johnny was warm against him, breaths even with sleep. He radiated contentment, snuggling up to Ghost like Simon would *protect him*. He would, obviously, but the fact that Soap trusted him to do so unconsciously... well, Ghost didn't have the time to unpack that. Not when the sugary sweet scent of peace that wafted off the Sergeant was lulling him into a rest of his own.

Ghost awoke to shuffling. Johnny, still in his arms and reeking of both groggy confusion and the last vestiges of slumber, was shoving lightly at his chest as he awoke. Ghost grumbled as cool air rushed into the new space in-between them, Johnny's remaining warmth quickly leaving his deathly cold form. Ghost rumbled– not quite a purr but nearly there– and pulled the Scotsman close once more, tucking him into the hollow of his throat. Safe and warm, as a Fledgling should be.

"Rest," he murmured, claws gently scraping at the base of the Sergeant's skull, drawing a shudder from him.

"L- teeeee," Johnny pouted, petulant as ever. It was relieving, Ghost would admit, to see Soap's usual insubordinate personality shining through the haze of venom still running rampant through his veins. The man's hands scrambled to find purchase on his shirt, budding claws tearing holes in the thin fabric. Ghost couldn't find it in himself to care. What was one measly shirt in the face of his fledgling's comfort?

"Hungry?" He inquired, keeping up the slow slide of his nails against the Sergeant's scalp. He could not smell the sharp scent of hunger on him, but it had only been a few hours since he had fed. That bitter, deathly sweet smell of starvation would not return for many more. *Ever*, if Ghost had anything to say about it.

"No," Soap huffed petulantly, but his squirming died down soon after. He seemed to have finally accepted that Ghost wasn't going anywhere. "...Hurts."

"Teeth?"

"...Yeah," Soap whispered. It was hardly a ghosting of breath against Ghost's neck. He's not sure a human would have been able to pick up on the soft sound. Still, embarrassment tinted Soap's scent—bittersweet and warm with a hint of acrid fear.

"Lemme see," Ghost mumbled, using his grip on Soap's hair to maneuver his head back enough so that he had easy access to the man's mouth. With his free hand, he grabbed the Sergeant's chin, using his thumb to prop his mouth open. Soap stank of bewilderment, but Ghost was here to *help*, whether or not the idiot Scotsman understood what was happening. From this new angle, he could see the inflamed gums around the new, emerging fangs. Red and puffy as they were, he's sure that the man was in a great deal of discomfort. The fangs were a decent way along, now, as the constant nibbling seemed to help them pull through a little more. Not enough to breach muscle, but Ghost is sure that they would be able to pierce at least the top few layers of his skin, were Soap to try. Johnny made a noise of discontent, displeased at the way he was manhandled so easily, but the hand grasping at Ghost's wrist only did just that. There was no attempt to yank him away. Taking that as permission, Ghost raised his thumb from the man's bottom lip to where his leftmost fang met tissue, and began to rub slow, gentle circles over the flesh.

Ghost remembers doing the same for himself, after he *escaped*. He had been half-starved and nearly mad, but he had managed to hunker down for a while, to wait out the shocks of *growing pains*, before he made his move. The gentle pressure had helped to ease the inflammation, and by the way Johnny's pupils dilated and his eyelids fluttered shut, the sensation was a welcome one. He kept up the movement for a moment before switching to the neglected fang. It was then that Soap snapped out of the near daze that he had been in. He jerked back, face flushed (with *Ghost's* blood, the beast preened) and eyes wide.

"It helps," he rumbled, cutting Soap's mortified spluttering off. "Eases the swelling. Fangs 're bigger 'an canines."

"... *Fangs?*" Johnny squeaked. Though he's sure that the man would not appreciate such a description being used, Ghost thought that it was *cute*, anyway. Still, he had assumed that by the time he awoke, Johnny would have figured out his *predicament*. Vampirism wasn't some close-guarded secret, anymore. Hadn't been since the first World War.

Carefully– as Ghost seemed to be so often around his Sergeant– he maneuvered Soap's hand– the one that had been around his wrist– to press against his open mouth. It wasn't graceful, but once the movement had been made for him, Johnny's fingers began pressing incessantly at the emerging fangs with increasingly frantic twitches.

"*Ghost*," Johnny mewled, distress clear as day in his tone. Ghost could only purr in response, wrapping his arms around Soap and drawing him back into his chest. He buried his face in the man's greasy warhawk as he started trembling. "*Ghost*," he tried again. "Ghost, there's *fangs*."

"Fledgling," Ghost hummed affectionately, nuzzling into Johnny's scalp.

It was silent for a long moment. Nothing was said between them, and only Johnny's ragged breathing and Ghost's purring as an attempt to soothe could be heard. Soap still trembled in his arms, but he had finally removed his hands from his mouth, instead returning them to Ghost's torn shirt. His purring raised an octave or two involuntarily when the man pressed his forehead harshly into the meat of his throat in an attempt to get closer. Usually, Ghost hated purring– that loud, instinctual sound that threatened to arise from deep within his chest when emotions ran high. It reminded him that he was more *beast* than *man*– more than the layers he hid under ever could. But with Johnny... Johnny made it feel *natural*. Like it was *humans* who were the strange ones, unable to express their delight or concern in such a way– to have a physical manifestation of it all to share with their broodmates.

It was Johnny's stomach grumbling that drew them from the near-peace of the moment. In turn, Soap hunched in on himself– as best he could while cradled in Ghost's arms– as if trying to escape the evidence of his growing hunger. It was practically second nature for Ghost to raise a hand from Johnny's back to dig a razor-sharp nail into his carotid artery again. The Fledgling needed sustenance, and any vampire knew that it was the best source to feed from. Soap's head snapped up at the savory scent of blood, pupils nearly encompassing his iris' crimson hue. Unfortunately, that dazed expression did not last long. Before Soap could nudge himself closer, get even a *lick* of the nectar that Ghost offered, he was pulling himself back. Those panicked breaths had kick-started once again, the man's chest rapidly rising and falling with it.

A part of Ghost– the *beast*– wanted to force him. To make Johnny

*understand* that he needed to feed to survive, that this was something that he would have to get *used to* because he had a long life ahead of him. But *Simon*... Simon remembered what it was like to be *forced*. To choke down the thick iron of his Sire. Have brutal hands restricting his airways until he had no choice but to swallow, still unused to the sensation of empty lungs. To resent every moment of his turning. Simon could not do that to Johnny. *Anyone but him*.

Instead, Simon *begged*.

"*Johnny*," he pleaded, coating two of his fingers with the viscous red liquid that flowed from his neck. He brought them before Soap's sealed lips— not forcing, not pressing. *Asking*.

The man stared at him for a long time, crimson gaze flickering between his own and his fingers. Ghost pointedly noted that he refused to look at the wound on his neck. Still, Johnny must have found *something*, for soon his pink tongue was flicking out hesitantly to taste the cooling blood on Ghost's fingers. The brief taste of iron seemed to ease the rigid line of Soap's posture, for within moments he was sinking back into Ghost like a content Fledgling *should*, and lapping at the sluggishly bleeding wound on his neck.

"You're not a monster, Johnny," Ghost whispered. He needed to get the idea into the man's head while he was still pliant with hunger and mutating venom. While he lost himself to new instincts, not a thought in his head other than filling his belly with all that Ghost offered. If he could make that a foundational thought in the Fledgling's mind, then maybe— *maybe* he wouldn't hate himself as Ghost did. Johnny was sugar and sunshine. He deserved *good* things.

"I don't know what happened out there, and I'm sorry, but I— you're not a monster, Johnny. Never." *Not to me*, he wanted to say, but couldn't bring himself to utter. Ghost *was* a monster— his opinion mattered little.

It was some time before the frantic suckling at his neck slowed to a stop. Instead of the sharp pin pricks of teething fangs following, it was the salty warmth of *tears*.

Ghost did his best to clutch Soap close— to offer a comfort Simon himself had never experienced. He did not want Johnny to cry. Fledgling or not, Johnny should not *weep*. He should be grinning wide enough that Ghost could see the pink hue of his gums, laughing so heartily he had to lean against someone to hold himself up. Sorrow

should not be an emotion that John MacTavish was familiar with. But, Ghost could only do *so much*.

"Ah didnae ken he had turned me," Soap spoke into the space between them, voice soft and barely held from shaking. "Ah thought—Ah thought he was jus'..." Soap trailed off, but Ghost didn't need him to continue. He knew. *Feral*, Johnny wanted to say, but didn't. Even now, he thought of *Ghost* first. Of how *Feral* was a slur thrown at him and his fellow Sire-less kind like candy on All Hallow's Eve. But that was not what Soap meant by his use of the word. It was not an *insult*, a vocalization of superiority. It was a description. One of a vampire starving and desperate for a meal, blood to keep them going, keep them *alive*. Mindless and instinct driven. *Actually* feral, like a wild, abandoned dog.

"Ah— Ah shot 'is bloody brains oout an' moved awn," Johnny trembled. "Ah didnae feel any different, Simon. Ah didnae *think*—"

"Killing him was the right thing," Ghost assured. He could not stop himself from resting a possessive hand on the back of Soap's neck. "You don't need a Sire like *that*." Ghost spat the words, a fury in his tone that he could not conceal. He nuzzled his face against the crown of Johnny's head. "Don't need him. Need *me*."

Soap pried his head away from Ghost's throat to look up at him. His lips and chin were stained a delightful scarlet and it made that beast *preen*. That was *Ghost's* blood that stained his skin. His eyes were wide, searching. For what, Ghost knew not, but he would let the man stare for as long as he wished regardless of how it made his unmasked face prickle with uncertainty and shame. A quivering hand released his shirt to trace the skin around his eyes, surprisingly mindful of his budding claws. "Are ye only like this because...?"

"No," Ghost shut him down quickly. "You're *my* Johnny. Should've never been turned. Just," Ghost sighed, letting his eyes flutter shut as that calloused hand came to rest more solidly on his cheek. "More honest. Instincts are all—" Ghost grunted, frustrated. He did not enjoy this talk of *feelings*. He was a silent, deadly creature of the night. Predators did not have *feelings*.

"Ah'm sorry."

Ghost's eyes flew open, gazing at his Sergeant in abject confusion. "What?"

"Yer only like this because Ah was *stupid* an' got mysel'—"

"*Stop*," Ghost hissed. "You are not *stupid*. You are not at *fault*. You have always been *mine*, Johnny. I don't drink from jus' any sorry bloke that *offers*."

Now it was Soap's turn to be puzzled. "Wha'?"

"*Stupid Scotsman*," Ghost groaned with a roll of his eyes. He leaned down and surged forward, crashing his chapped lips against Johnny's bloodstained ones. It was quick, despite the passion Ghost put behind it. He did not want to *coerce* Johnny— not while venom still coursed through his veins.

"*Oh*," Johnny said simply after Ghost had drawn away. His cheeks were a bright rouge, and his mouth hung slightly ajar.

"*Oh*," Ghost parroted.

"Ah thought—" Soap wet his lips. "Ah thought Ah was jus'... useful tae ye."

"You *think* too much." Ghost drew the man close once again, tucking him firmly against his chest. "You're not very good at it."

"*Ghost!*" Johnny spluttered, offended.

"*Hush*," Ghost demanded instead. "*Sleep*."

There were still plenty of painful days ahead of them. He needed all the rest he could get.

## Chapter End Notes

Sorry for any particularly glaring formatting/grammar/spelling errors. This was written and published entirely on our phone so no grammarly :/

# oh my cotton socks! did you not hear what i just said?!

## Chapter Notes

a new chapter that goes absolutely nowhere letssss gooooooo  
babeyyyyyyy

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

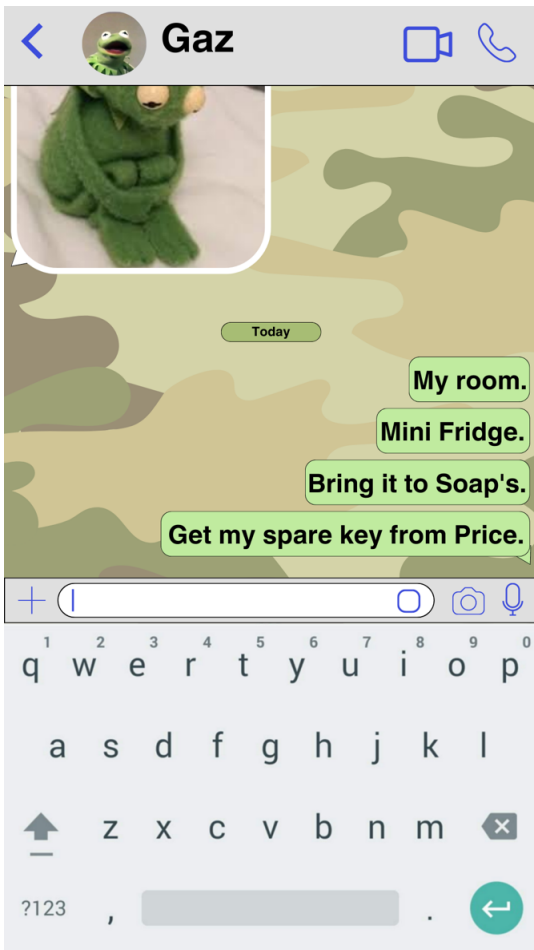
For all that Ghost would have liked to stay curled around Johnny for the rest of time, the Sergeant needed to feed often, and Simon only had so much blood in his veins. In the last twelve hours, they had gone through two more feeding sessions, and Ghost was about dry.

“Johnny,” he rumbled softly, nuzzling the admittedly quite greasy strands of the Scot’s warhawk. He would need to help him bathe, at some point. Soap only purred, tightening the grip he had around Ghost’s waist, as if he could get any closer. “Johnny,” He tried again—much to the same effect. “I have to feed.”

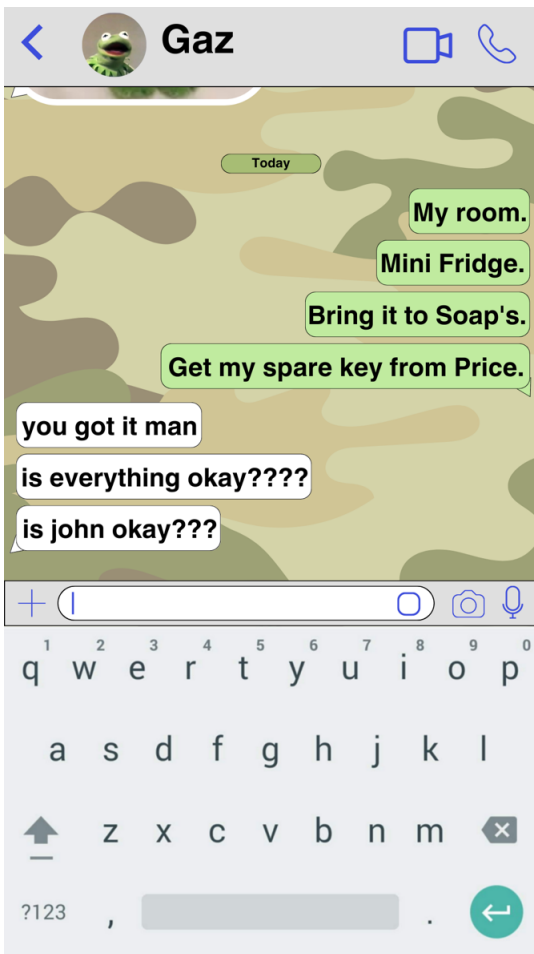
None of it was of much use, however. By the state of Johnny’s blown-out pupils, it was unlikely that the man was picking up anything more than the sound of his voice. The venom was in full swing at the moment. All Ghost could do was sigh as Soap’s clawed fingers pawed rhythmically at his back like a contented cat making biscuits.

With a muted grunt, Ghost tightened his arm around Johnny’s back so that he could safely lean over the man to grab his phone from the nightstand. It was mostly dead— as expected— but it would do the job. He debated texting Price, but fury still sang through his veins at the thought of their Captain. Ghost didn’t trust himself not to tear that man apart should he lay eyes on him. Soap needed comfort, not a *beast*. Gaz was next. Ghost trusted Gaz. They weren’t all that close, but the Sergeant was a good man. And, Soap’s best friend to boot. With a single thumb, he rushed a message to Gaz.

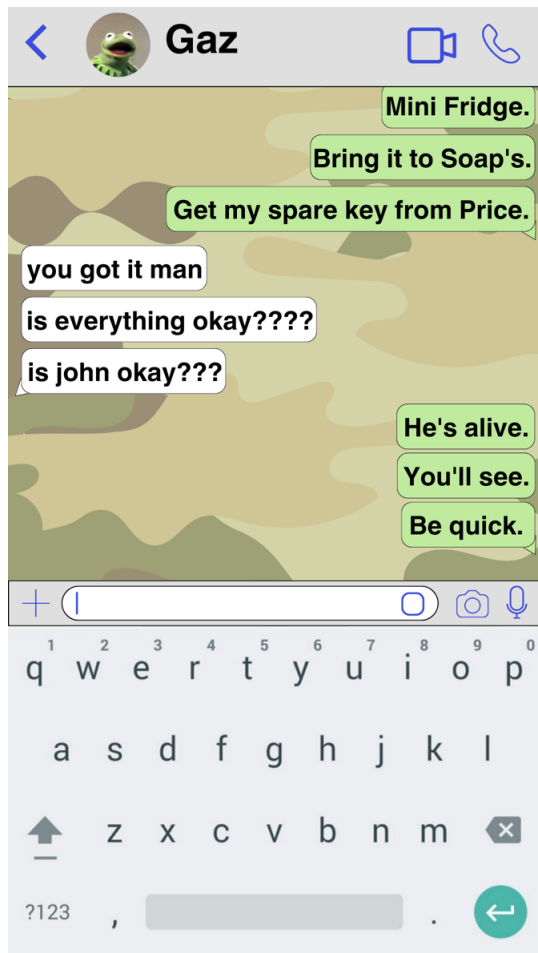




Gaz replied within a moment. He always did. Ghost appreciated the efficiency.



That was another thing Ghost appreciated about Gaz. He cared- quite a bit. Always looking out for them whether they needed it or not.



Ghost honestly didn't give it much thought, after that. He was soon distracted by Johnny's distressed whines at not having Simon's undivided attention. It was cute, honestly. Annoying, but cute. Johnny really was like a cat, claws and all. About as mindless as one, too.

There was a knock at the door surprisingly soon, and Ghost reluctantly parted from a whimpering Soap to unlock it.

"This thing's surprisingly heavy," Gaz grunted as he stepped into the room. He seemed mildly peeved, but Simon hadn't the foggiest as to why. Ghost only hummed his acknowledgment, watching as the Sergeant set the small fridge on Soap's desk and plugged it in next to the lamp. Soap's desperate cries only grew louder. He sounded like a chirping baby bird, blind and helpless, hoping its mother would return soon. Ghost supposed that it wasn't an *inaccurate* description.

"It's alright, Johnny," Ghost purred, standing beside the cot so that he

could run his fingers through his hair. "I'm not leaving you."

"Is he okay?" Gaz asked, still beside the desk. He was nervously fiddling with his fingers, and his brow was furrowed with unmistakable concern. Clearly, he hadn't seen Soap's eyes yet.

"C'mere," he motioned the man over with his free hand. It would be easier than *speaking*. Besides, Gaz was human. Johnny's human friend. Ghost did not have to protect him from Gaz. Moreover, Gaz was not *Price*. Garrick had been with *him*, following his orders to a T. He was not to blame. That feral beast within him did not scream for his blood.

Hesitantly, Garrick approached the cot. He gasped sharply when Johnny's crimson irises undoubtedly came into view. "*Oh god*," he whispered lowly. He seemed mournful, but not scared. He did not fear Johnny— his crimson gaze, the feral creature others were guaranteed to label him as. "I'm gonna fuckin' kill Price."

"Get in line," Ghost growled.

Gaz sighed, running a trembling hand over his face. "Go eat, Ghost. You're as pale as, well, a *ghost*. I'll watch 'em."

"He's clingy," Simon warned as he backed off with one last scritch to Johnny's scalp. The Sergeant just waved him off, more than used to Soap's clingy nature.

As Ghost retrieved a blood bag at random from the fridge Gaz had graciously brought over, he could hear the man begin murmuring to Soap. It was sweet, truly, how much he and Garrick cared for each other. They were like two peas in a pod, most days. Ghost found that he didn't mind being maskless around the Sergeant, either. It did not make his skin crawl or his hair rise. Gaz could be *trusted*. Soap seemed to think so too, because very quickly he was all but crawling into the man's lap, wrapping his limbs around him like a fucking python. *Fledglings*, Ghost thought fondly as he sunk his teeth into the chilled bag in his hand. He hated cold blood, but it would do.

"*John*," Gaz sighed exasperatedly. Ghost watched him practically nuzzle the side of Soap's face, though, so he obviously wasn't as put-off as he tried to seem. "You cannot *physically* get any closer to me."

"He can't hear you," Ghost chuckled softly. "Venom's too strong, right now. He's all instinct." Ghost paused, unsure if he should continue. If it would be too *open*. But Johnny didn't deserve to be alone, like Ghost did. "He knows you're safe, though. That you're his friend."

Gaz's eyes widened before softening immeasurably. "That's— I'm glad."

Ghost let Gaz and Soap have their privacy after that, turning back around to down a few more bags. He needed the fuel. It wasn't often that he was this low. Garrick was right about him being pale. He was a little more than *pale*. He damned near matched his hair. Johnny's purring was loud— unbelievably so. It settled something within Simon's chest, knowing that Johnny had a *brood*. Gaz may have been human, but if Soap considered him family, that was all that mattered. A brood would be good for Johnny. He deserved to be happy.

It wasn't long, though, before Gaz had to leave. He was still on the clock. Technically, he and Johnny were, too, but Ghost had enough strings he could pull after all of this had run its course for it not to matter. At the very least, it wouldn't matter for *Soap*. He could guarantee that much.

"I know, John," Garrick cooed softly as he did his best to detangle himself from Soap— who stank of a terrible grief. "I'll be back when I can. I have to go, now." Johnny was all pleading whines and soft cries. His pupils had dilated impossibly more, and the glossy sheen to them as tears welled nearly made *Ghost* cave— and they weren't even directed at him. It was Simon's intervention that allowed Gaz to finally slip away with murmured apologies.

Garrick hesitated at the door, gaze lingering on how Johnny clung pitifully to Ghost's upright form. "Let me know if you need anything, okay? I— I want to help."

Ghost nodded his acceptance. "I will... Thank you." With that, the door clicked shut behind the Sergeant, and it was him and Johnny once again.

It was perhaps another six hours and one feeding session later that the venom in Johnny's veins slowed for a time. He awoke as groggily as he always did, snuffling and twitching like a baby animal. Soap was cute like this, Ghost thought. Sweet. Innocent, almost.

"Summat smells different," he murmured against Ghost's chest, fingers digging in a tad too harshly into Simon's flanks.

"Gaz was here," Ghost said softly. "Brought my supply. Watched you for a bit."

Johnny groaned, the distinct scent of embarrassment wafting from him. "Ah was aw loopy again, wasnae Ah?"

"It's cute," Ghost chuckled. "Had to pry you from 'im though. Bloody clingy bastard."

"He's never gonnae let me live it doown."

"No," Ghost whispered, pressing a lingering kiss to Johnny's scalp in order to contain himself. Johnny needed all things soft, right now. He did not need to hear the vitriol Simon wanted to spit at Price. "He's just worried. He's part of your brood."

"Wa's a brood?" Soap questioned, squinting up at him. Ghost was helpless to suppress the coo that bubbled from his throat at the sight of his sleep-mussed hair and the red lines pressed into the fat of his cheek from the sheets and Ghost's shirt. "Dinnae make fun o' me, ye bawbag!"

"Not makin' fun of you," Simon purred, pressing their foreheads together. That beast in him was roaring, again. Begging him to wrap Johnny up in their arms and never let him go. *Mate*, it screamed, but now was not the time. "Hmm, *fledgling*," Ghost allowed himself to indulge in the proximity for a moment longer. He had to answer Johnny eventually, after all. He sighed. "A brood 's like— a wolf's pack. It's family but— more than that?" Ghost groaned, eyelids fluttering shut in his frustration. "It's all instinct. Dunno how to describe it."

"Dae ye have a brood?" Soap asked innocently. It was *sweet* that Johnny thought anyone would consider a feral thing like him *family*— a *loved* one.

Ghost let his eyes open slowly, gazing fondly at Soap's soft features. He was scraggly looking, for sure, but he was Johnny, and Johnny would always be beautiful in his eyes. "Not many people like to get close to creatures like me, Johnny."

Soap's brow furrowed, thin lips pulling into a stark frown. "But aw th' others awn base interact with people no problem?" His voice was higher-pitched, distinctly upset. He stank of sorrow, too. A bitter, unpleasant scent. "Why does it have tae be different fer ye?"

Ghost smiled softly, raising a hand to cup Johnny's cheek ever so gently. Johnny deserved all things gentle— tender. If he could hide him away from the world forever, he would. "I'm considered irredeemable,

Johnny. An unforgivable monster. Vampires are pack animals, you know? More than even humans.”

“But—”

“It’s just the way the world is,” Ghost sighed. “I killed my sire. That’s all they see. That’s all they know me as. A beast.” Simon swiped away a tear that dared to escape Johnny’s eye. Soap should not weep. He did not deserve sorrow. “But they love you. They’ll all understand. You’re not a beast, Johnny. Everyone knows that.”

“Yer part of my brood,” Johnny sniffled. He choked back a sob and buried his face back into Ghost’s chest. “Ye’ve never been a— a *beast*. Not tae me. Never tae me. Ah—”

“Shhh,” Ghost soothed, curling around Soap once more. “I’ve got you, love.”

“Yer my brood, Simon,” Johnny cried. “Yer my family. *Swear it.*”

“I swear, Johnny,” Ghost whispered into his scalp. “As long as you’ll have me.”

Chapter End Notes

[Simon Sketch](#)

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# wouldn't it be clever of you... if after everything, you simply let me die?

## Chapter Summary

//TWs/CWs// temporary character death + grief + references to Ghost's past of being buried alive + also just lots of mention of death and dying in general. Seriously, this chapter isn't light despite its happy ending

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Ghost... *feared* the last part of Johnny's transition. Fledglings were soft and warm and sweet but vampirism was *not*. Eventually, the body had to die. Had to adapt. Ghost knew what it was like to die. To *feel it* and still be *awake*. It was by no means *pleasant*, and Ghost did not know how he could handle watching *Johnny* go through that. Soap did not deserve to be in *pain*, of any sort, least of all *this kind*. To feel your heart stop? The blood chill in your veins? Your body learn to live without oxygen? Your cells adapt to feed on human blood? To change the very wiring in your *brain*? That was an agony Ghost did not wish on anybody.

And Ghost had yet to tell Johnny about it.

How could he? How could he sit there and *tell* the sweet little fledgling that he was going to *die*? That he was going to *hurt*? He deserved to enjoy the soft bits while it lasted. Enjoy being warm with Ghost's blood and the pleasant ache of sinking new baby fangs into Ghost's skin.

The worst part was that Ghost didn't know when it would start. There was no time frame for this. Some went through it almost immediately. Others took days, weeks, *months*. Simon had turned, truly, in that coffin. Had died six feet under and emerged not a man but a *monster*. He had been alone. Writhing and clawing at the wooden box, squirming atop the corpse of his back-stabbing commander. He had howled and cried and torn himself to bits. As selfish as it was, he did not want to see Johnny go through that. He would, of course. Ghost would not leave his side. Not now, not ever. But he didn't want to see it. He wanted to ignore it. Pretend like it wouldn't happen, *hadn't* happened. To lock the Sergeant's door behind



him and ignore the agonized wails. But he couldn't. He wouldn't. Johnny deserved nice things. Not maggots and worms and lungs filled with dirt.

But Johnny wasn't there, yet. He still slept soundly, curled against his chest like a newborn babe. Ghost wanted it to stay like this forever. Wanted Johnny soft and sweet and free of pain and hardship. No more war, no more bloodshed. Just this— just *them*. For eternity.

But peace could not last forever.

Soon, Gaz was knocking at the door. His brows were furrowed, gaze dark and angry, and there was a distinct frown pulling at his lips.

"Price *demands* he sees you, Ghost," the man huffed in lieu of a greeting. There was never a need for small talk between them. Ghost appreciated that about Gaz. Ghost did not like *small talk*. "He's being —" Gaz cut himself off with a frustrated huff. "I tried my best to get him off your case."

Ghost rested a hand on the Sergeant's shoulder, giving it a squeeze. He understood. Gaz's *partner* or not, Price was still their Captain, and it had been a *while* since he or Soap had reported for duty. Gaz could only do so much. That didn't mean that Ghost was *happy* with the news, but he would not unleash his simmering rage on the younger man. He seemed frustrated enough as is. "Watch him while I'm gone?"

"Of course," Gaz practically deflated under Ghost's touch. "Just— be quick? I don't know much about this stuff..."

Ghost gave him one last pat on the shoulder for good measure before stepping past him. "It'll be fine. He's asleep right now. Usually doesn't wake until three to feed."

Ghost could feel that fury sparking low in his gut as he made his way to their Captain's office. He prayed, for all of their sakes, that it did not ignite into a roaring flame. That Ghost could keep himself in check, grit his teeth and bear the meeting so that he could get back to Johnny as soon as possible. He was already itching to have his fledgling back in his arms, tucked away and *safe*.

Ghost did not bother knocking. He did not have the energy for *pleasantries*. He was a feral beast, a predator waiting to clamp his maw over a rabbiting pulse.

"Captain," he said simply.

"Ghost." Price leaned forward, hands clasped firmly where they sat upon his desk. If Ghost were human, were *weaker*, he supposed it would be intimidating. Seeing that harsh gaze glaring at him from under the rim of Price's classic hat would have had anyone else groveling. But Ghost was not *anybody*, and he did not submit to his Captain. Their relationship was harbored on mutual respect and nothing more. Price knew that. Ghost knew that. But the game they played had come to a head. "Care to explain where you and your Sergeant have been? Why you've been skimping out on your duties and no one but Gaz has seen hide nor tail of you?"

Ghost sneered, the baring of his fangs hidden under the fabric of his familiar painted balaclava. "No."

Price removed his hat, setting it aside to level Ghost with the most heated look he'd ever seen from the Captain. "Let me rephrase that, then. Explain to me why you and your Sergeant have been *missing*, and I might consider *only* writing you up for insubordination."

Ghost growled, eyes flashing in the low light of the room as he slammed his hands down on Price's desk. To his credit, the Captain did not flinch. A lesser man would have. *Should have*. "Let me put it to you this way, *Captain* ." Price's lip curled. This was not the man that helped piece him back together again after Roba. Not *John*. This was the feared Captain Price. The man who took no shit, even from his own superiors. But he was only *human*. "I am spending every ounce of energy I have trying not to *rip you to pieces* ." He took a steadying breath. "This is not the *time*—"

The door burst open behind them with a *bang* , no doubt doing some kind of damage to both the hinges and the wall. Ghost whipped around, intent on tearing whatever sorry soul that dared to interrupt them a new one. But it was not some stupid, mindless Private who had burst into the office.

It was *Johnny*. And Gaz wasn't far behind him.

He was trembling like a leaf, eyes leaking, and chest stuttering in short, pained gasps. He was as white as a sheet and looked on the verge of *collapse*. Ghost barely made it to him in time before his knees actually buckled.

"*Johnny*," he rumbled softly, carding fingers through the man's flattened warhawk. Soap's hands found his shirt easily, claws digging new holes into the fabric as if it was the only thing keeping him

afloat. It likely was.

"I dunno what's happening," Gaz wheezed from the doorway. "He was fine and then— I don't know. He just started *screaming*."

Ghost's heart dropped. Sank like a stone in the ocean of his gut. He had hoped that they had more time, more— *anything*.

"Kyle," Price started, concern lacing his tone. He didn't get far.

"No!" Gaz huffed, frustrated. "You don't get to be all— all *worried*." Ghost had never seen the man so *angry*. And certainly not at their Captain. "Not when he got turned under *your* watch! When— when he said it feels like he's dying and I can't do anything about it!" Gaz loved fiercely, and he and Johnny were *brothers* in all but blood.

Johnny clung to him like a babe, nuzzling into his chest like it would alleviate the pain Ghost knew was wracking through his body. Gaz was right. There was nothing they *could* do. There was no way to make dying *easier*.

"It'll be okay, Johnny," he cooed quietly, clutching Johnny as close as physically possible. It wasn't enough. It never would be. "I'm right here. It's just— it's just gonna hurt for a little while."

"*Simon*," Johnny whined— a reedy, pathetic sound. Ghost purred, curling around the wounded man as best he could. As if it would help. As if he could protect Johnny from his own death.

He guided Soap's head to rest in the crook of his neck, hand on his nape like he was scruffing a pup. "Just— feed, Johnny. It'll be okay. I'm not gonna leave you. I'll be right here the whole time."

He looked up, meeting Gaz's eyes as Johnny sunk his fangs into his neck with a weak cry of pain. "We need to get him back to his room. Need our nest." Faintly, visions of the *nest* he had turned in plagued his peripherals. A bedding of sharp bones and wriggling worms. Walls of rough wood and a ceiling inches from his face. Trapped. Boxed in. Himself not much different than the drained and rotting corpse below him.

Gaz nodded resolutely, a familiar fire in his eyes. "I'll clear the halls."

Price butted in before Ghost could fully rise to his feet to follow Gaz, Johnny securely in his arms. "You boys are cleared for the foreseeable future. Reach out if you need *anything*."

Ghost turned his head to meet his eyes one final time. Burning red against icy blue. "You are not forgiven."

"I don't expect to be. Do what you need to do, Simon."

Ghost was out of the office in a flash, feet carrying him steadfastly in the direction of Johnny's room. The halls were devoid of all but the glaring fluorescent lights, and faintly he could hear Gaz's stern voice barking orders at any unfortunate stragglers. The Sergeant was a kind man, but at times Ghost thought the Privates feared Gaz's wrath more than they feared *his*. Soap's body contracted and spazzed at random intervals, the teeth in his neck harsh and unforgiving. The pain was but a footnote in Ghost's mind, however. He was far more focused on the feeling of tears wetting his skin and the horrible cries escaping his fledgling's throat.

He wanted to peel Johnny's skin away and crawl inside. Take his place for a while so that he never had to experience what it was like to feel his heart finally stop. Feel his lungs become useless. His blood stale. There was no handbook to vampirism. No how-to list that made *turning* any easier. Eternity came with a myriad of faults and prices to pay, and this was one of them.

Gaz was holding the door to Soap's room open when they arrived. He was panicked, clearly, and his eyes shone with tears that Ghost knew he would not let himself shed. He hovered at the door as Ghost lowered himself onto the bed. "Is he...?"

Ghost sighed, swallowing thickly. "We're undead for a reason, Gaz. You have to die first." The man only wheezed out a soft ' *oh* .' Ghost could not blame him. Death was not an easy subject, especially in their line of work. But Johnny would see the other side. Stay topside. Stay walking and thinking and *existing*. Not alive, but there. "Go be with the Captain, Sergeant. You do not want to witness what comes next."

"I—" His voice was garbled, *croaky*. Ghost could have sworn he saw a lone tear trail down his cheek. "He'll be okay?"

"He'll be like me." Ghost pulled one of the few blankets in the nest over them, hiding them from the world. Instinct screamed at him to cower away in a dark corner with Johnny. To wait out the pains safely while his fledgling was so vulnerable. " *Go* ."

They were shrouded in darkness after the light from the open door had been extinguished. It would be good for Johnny's sensitive eyes.

Simon remembers how the light had burned his own when he had dug himself free. How he had clawed at his face in a vain attempt to make it *stop*. The man was still writhing in his arms, little choked-off gasps filling the otherwise silent room. Something deep within his chest ached— something deeper than the *beast*. Something that wanted to burn the world for daring to make John Mactavish *hurt*.

Ghost didn't know how to make this better. To make Johnny *okay*. All he could do was *wait*.

It took ten minutes and twenty-eight seconds for Soap's chest to stop rising. It took another minute and forty-two seconds for his eyes to glaze over. Another six minutes and six seconds for the twitching of his limbs and fingers to cease completely. Another eight minutes and four seconds for the last twinge of warmth to leave.

Simon stopped counting, after that.

How long had he been cradling a *corpse* to his chest? How long had he watched his skin grow pale, his blood pool in his side and veins grow dark?

How long had it been since he'd lost hope that Johnny would wake up?

Ghost felt like he had died as well. Wished the reaper would take him, too. It wouldn't be so bad, would it? Here, eternally, curled alongside Johnny? Maybe they'd fuse together as they rotted, until not even the best forensic teams could tell their skeletons apart. It was almost enough to make Ghost smile.

Ghost had no basis for how long this was *supposed* to take. The dead can't count. You don't exactly *speak* of the turning, either. Who would want to? Who would willingly speak of their own thrashing death and the searing claws of rebirth? It was a private thing done amongst broodmates.

All at once Ghost feared the absence of Johnny's actual Sire. As much as Ghost had scorned his own— been *buried* by his own— he had still drank Roba's blood until he would stick around to see another day. Johnny had drank *his*, lived long enough to see the turning, but would it be enough to carry him through?

Would Johnny wake up again?

Or would his final moments be in agony, wrapped up in Ghost's arms, with the false promise that it would be okay?

Six days, fourteen hours, eight minutes, and fifty-three seconds.

For almost seven days Ghost waited in agony. Waited for Johnny to take his first breath, newly damned.

He did not grow any warmer in Ghost's arms, and quite frankly he never would again. But, that first rattling inhale, pained and full of a life they should not have been granted, was *music* to his ears.

Despite the relief flooding his veins so heavily he feared it'd escape through his eyes, Ghost stayed quiet. He did not move an inch as those rasping gasps turned smoother in pitch, lungs no longer struggling to remember what it was like to *breathe* . It was always a bit funny to Ghost, the brain's reluctance to let breathing go. A vampire didn't need to breathe. They did not need oxygen to fuel their cells the same way a human did. They were fundamentally changed, and yet, such a *human* condition persisted.

It took another two hours for Johnny's brain to come back online with a rumbling groan. Another twenty-four seconds for those pretty, fiery irises to greet the darkness of the room. He blinked slowly, like each minute flutter of his eyelids was a monumental task. His gaze was hazy, muddled with confusion and a bone-deep exhaustion. However, when his eyes met Ghost's, the corners of his lips tugged into a *smile* .

A smile. For Ghost.

"Johnny," Ghost whispered into the silence. His voice was just as hoarse as Soap's was bound to be. He had not used it since Gaz had shut that door behind him. What was the point, talking to a corpse? It would not have made the wait any *easier*. Perhaps the yawning quiet in lieu of a reply would have finally broken Ghost in a way his brooding couldn't.

"Simon," Johnny tried to say, but the name died on his tongue. A wheeze of air and silent lips. But it was okay. Ghost is sure his throat was dry. Was he hungry? Ghost can't remember if starvation had gnawed away at his gut, locked away in the coffin. His only thought had been to get *out* .

"It's okay, luv," Ghost murmured in reassurance as the man's face fell.

"You've only just awoken."

It was easy to state the facts. To focus on the way Soap's chest rose and fell in rhythm. To note the way his darkened veins and pooled blood had already begun to fade significantly. Soon, he would be as pristine as he had ever been. Soon, Ghost could push the feeling of holding his motionless corpse to the back of his mind, where he stored most thoughts of Zaragoza. They did not need the past when they had eternity ahead of them.

"You should eat. It'll be— it'll be good for you."

That beast in his chest mourned the loss of Johnny's fledgling state. Soap would not need him to feed anymore. He didn't need a Sire's blood. He didn't need *Ghost* anymore.

Somehow, that didn't stop the man from leaning forward and sinking his fangs into the skin of Ghost's neck anyway.

Simon couldn't stop the whimper that bubbled from his throat at the feeling. This was not the precious nibbling of a fledgling. Not the gentle suckling needed to survive. This? It felt like *sin*.

Johnny's fangs were twin hot spikes in his muscle. The way his tongue lathed over the puncture wounds was nothing short of *indulgent*. This was *greed*, simply put. Feeding for the sensation rather than the sustenance. And something told him that Soap *knew that*. Knew it, and did it regardless.

Soap parted from him with a wet smack of his lips, mouth speckled red with *Simon's* blood. Because Johnny wanted it that way. Wanted *Ghost's blood*. Those pretty lips curved up in a devilish smile.

"Better 'an ever, Simon." That familiar Scottish lilt was raspy, but Ghost didn't *care*. It was so good to hear. An audible indication that Soap was *here*.

Ghost's traitorous hands shook where they reached to cup Soap's face. It had been so *long* since he'd seen that feral grin. Seen him *blink*, even. "I missed you," he murmured. Each syllable felt like a knife in his chest. A vivisection that bore his deepest sins. His unbreakable attachment to his Sergeant, his Johnny.

Soap did not respond— not verbally. What was there to say, after all? He had nothing to apologize for, and no words would soothe the ache his lifeless body had left. So his smile turned a little softer, eyes a little

sadder. His own hands on Ghost's face were just as reverent, just as *shaky*. His movements were gentle as he guided Simon's face closer. His lips were tender as he pressed them to Ghost's. His breath was unsteady, puffing out of his nose. Almost as if he were crying.

It was all Ghost needed to surge forward with renewed vigor. To show all he couldn't say with each open-mouthed kiss he pressed against Johnny's lips. He told him all about the anguish he had left in his absence, and Soap's answering acknowledgment was found in the insistence of his tongue licking across Simon's fangs. *I'm here*, each trail of drool leaking from their mouths said. *You're not getting rid of me that easily*.

Ghost found himself panting when Soap finally pulled away. Breathless without the need for air yet craving it anyway. Johnny was purring, loud and rumbling. Like an *engine*. It nearly brought tears to his eyes to hear it again. To *feel* Johnny alive in his arms.

"Ye cannae get rid o' me tha' easily, L.t." He smiled dopily, gazing at Ghost like he hung the damn stars. "Who else is gonnae mate me?"

Ghost could not be held responsible for the way he practically pounced on the man. There was no venom in his veins, now. Nothing stopping Simon from holding Soap down and licking into his mouth like a dying man searching for water. Cheeky fucking bastard.

That beast in his belly only purred, sated at long last. Johnny's ringing laugh of pure elation only solidified that fact.

## Chapter End Notes

Would y'all 18+ folks want a ✧spicy✧ continuation of this chapter? It'd be in a separate work, but let us know if that's sumthn you'd like to see and we'll do our best to find the time to write it

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